

## GVSU splits incubator assignment

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Published: June 1, 2009

Rich Cook, Venture Center director at the West Michigan Science and Technology Initiative in Grand Rapids, will now be working two days a week at another GVSU business incubator, the Michigan Alternative and Renewable Energy Center in Muskegon, according to an announcement from GVSU.

"Our goal is to take the MAREC incubator and related entrepreneurial consulting program to the next level. Rich will really be able to help with those services," said Arnold Boezaart, interim director of MAREC. "With his work at WMSTI and his extensive professional credentials, he has expertise with business incubators and new product commercialization coaching in the region."

Cook started working at WMSTI in 2007. It provides entrepreneurs and small companies access to laboratory facilities and equipment where they can develop new ideas in science and technology and prepare them for the marketplace. Cook provides expertise in laying out commercialization roadmaps and business development plans.



Rich cook, Venture Center director at the West Michigan Science and Technology Initiative in Grand Rapids, will expand his duties as he helps the Michigan Alternative and Renewable Energy Center in Muskegon.

The MAREC facility on the Muskegon Lake waterfront presently houses Smart Vision Lights. Other tenants that recently occupied MAREC have left following successful completion of their start-up activities, including small wind turbine developer EarthTronics and agricultural biodigester developer Reynolds Inc.

Cook, the former CEO of X-Rite Inc., has worked in diverse markets including instrumentation, software, office furniture, transportation, aerospace, displays, computer peripherals, business machinery and solid waste disposal. He also has taught at Hope College and Grand Valley State University.

MAREC is a business incubator and research/development center for alternative and renewable energy technologies. It also serves as a major demonstration site of those technologies, being equipped with a fuel cell that turns natural gas into electricity, photovoltaic cells to capture the sun's energy, an extremely efficient natural gas microturbine and a nickel metal hydride battery to store excess energy from peak times for use later. It is thought to be the first building of its kind to use all of those technologies to become completely self-sufficient in its energy needs.

Last year MAREC opened a \$2.7 million manure-to-electricity plant at a dairy farm in Ravenna and helped launch a partnership between contractor Reynolds Inc. and the Austrian firm Entec Biogas GmbH, which developed the technology for the biodigester plant. The companies launched a new division, now based at MAREC, which hopes to build more of these plants in the U.S.

Also developed at MAREC, under the direction of former MAREC director Imad Mahawili, is a small wind turbine with magnets in multiple blade tips and the electrical coil in a ring surrounding the blade tips. The design reportedly permits generation of electricity at lower wind speeds than those required by conventionally designed turbines.

MAREC and WMSTI are two of the original 11 SmartZones created by the Michigan Economic Development Corp. in 2001 as part of an effort to promote and attract high technology business development in the state. Grand Valley was the only

university in the state to be granted two SmartZones. There are now 15 designated SmartZones in Michigan.

WMSTI, located in the Grand Valley State University Cook DeVos Center for Health Sciences on the "Medical Mile" on Michigan Street, was formed in 2003 as a partnership between the Right Place Inc., Van Andel Research Institute, Grand Valley State University, the city of Grand Rapids and Grand Rapids Community College. The partnership now also includes Spectrum Health, Saint Mary's Health Care and Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital.